

311 of the forest resources and the breeding of a
241 few sheep and cattle, provide the sustenance of
the great majority of Cherán's population.

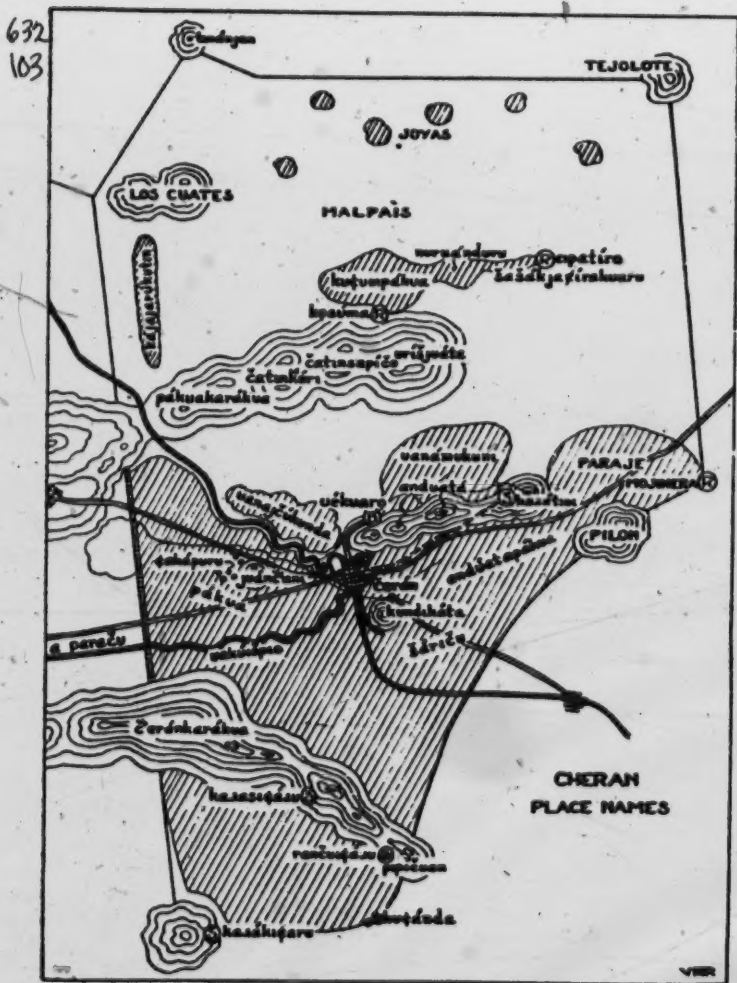
- 632 The town of Cherán has a population of
- 162 about 5,000. The community is unique among
- 361 Tarascan towns, not only for its large size—
- almost 2,000 more than that of any other
- settlement—but because the *municipio* of the
- same name contains only two, unimportant
- rancherías. Most *municipios* in the Tarascan
- area consist of one moderately large settlement,
- the *cabecera*, and a surrounding group of small
- settlements known as *tenencias*, and still smaller
- communities known as *rancherías* or by
- other classificatory terms. Usually the total
- populations of these *municipios* approximate
- the population of Cherán or even exceed it.
- Consequently, the unique feature of the *municipio*
- of Cherán is the concentration of almost
- the entire population in the *cabecera*.

- 632 Despite the concentration of population in the
- cabecera, the *municipio* of Cherán comprises
- 311 a large area. Much of this area is mountain
- 578 and forest, but there are many relatively large
- tracts of arable land (maps 2, 3). This cir-
- cumstance, in part at least, has been the cause
- of numerous boundary disputes and some loss
- of territory. The most notable recent loss of
- territory has been the secession of the one
- tenencia* of Cherán, the rather large settlement
- of Cheranástico to the northwest, which seceded
- in 1939 and joined the *municipio* of Paracho.
- The immediate cause of this secession again
- appears to have been a boundary dispute be-
- tween the *tenencia* and the *cabecera*.

- 361 Cherán differs from the ordinary Tarascan
- agricultural village only in size. Throughout
- the area the type of settlement is the compact
- village. Probably in most cases the villages
- represent settlements of Spanish type, with a
- central plaza about which are the church
- (sometimes not actually on the plaza), the
- municipal building, and, more recently, the
- school. From the central plaza radiates a
- rectangular grid of streets, modified only where
- necessitated by the irregular terrain (maps
- 4, 5). In the case of a large settlement such
- as Cherán, there usually exists some fragmen-
- tary legend of origin of the settlement through
- amalgamation of aboriginal groups dispersed

[text continues on p. 12a]

CHIRÁN: A SIERRA TARASCAN VILLAGE—WALS



MAP 2.—The municipio of Charrin, showing the more important place names. See map 1 for explanation of symbols.

[p, q]

243 wheeled oxcarts is possible, although they are
 492 rarely used. Burros usually have to be rented
 [427] or borrowed; in the latter case, a gift of maize
 or money equal to the rent is usually made.
 Fifty centavos a day is the usual pay for burros,
 which adds considerably to the expense of
 bringing in the harvest from distant fields.
 Often pay is in maize and is subject to some
 bargaining.

243 The time of the harvest varies in different
 632 places. If the "plain" west of town is planted,
 the main harvest is in November, but if the
 "plain" southeast of town is planted, the har-
 vest is in December. In either case, the town
 council, in consultation with the principal land-
 owners, sets the dates for harvests. Where
 lands adjoin those of neighboring towns, usu-
 ally both towns begin the same day. Eight
 days after the date set, anyone may turn
 animals into the fields. Persons who have not
 completed harvesting or carrying in their har-
 vest may have difficulty protecting it from
 animals.

243 As the harvest is a time of joint work, even
 527 though not communal in character, it also is a
 632 rather festive and social occasion. Moreover,
 273 many workmen have more money than at any
 other time. To protect them from tempta-
 tions, keep them sober while working, and avoid
 distractions, the sale of fruit or liquor is pro-
 hibited outside the edge of town. Actually,
 the "edge of town" becomes somewhat elastic,
 and vendors may set up stands as much as half
 a kilometer from town.

243 In 1940 the following schedule of harvests
 was posted:

December 5. Huanaschucun (sloping lands at the
 foot of the Cerro de la Virgen, northwest of town).

December 9. Eastern part of the "plain" of Sharicho
 and Rincon de Paso.

December 16. Western part of Sharicho.

December 19. Plain of Arantepacua.

No rules were posted for smaller isolated
 areas and fields which were fenced. The parts
 of Sharicho and other areas close to the
 Nahuatzen boundary were harvested beginning
 November 26 in order to prevent conflicts over
 animals crossing the boundary.

251 White maize and yellow maize are stored un-
 243 shelled in the lofts of "trojes." Little effort is
 taken to protect maize from rats and squirrels

- 245 *tejocote* as a domesticated type. It is harvested and exported for making jellies and preserves. A few are used locally.
- [252] [439] Some quince trees are found in Cherán. They are little used, but some preserves are made.

BELIEFS AND CUSTOMS

- 241 Most beliefs and customs center about maize. Most important are the beliefs about red ears, *čóču*. A red ear is described as the mother, chief, and *ace* (ceremonial leader) of all maize. In the storage lofts, red ears are mixed in with the yellow and white to act as guardian of the rest. They are never eaten until all the white and the yellow corn are gone. Care is taken to plant seed from one or more red ears in each field; otherwise it is believed that there will be no harvest.

- [755] Red ears and black ears are both said to be used in curing, but no details could be secured.

Twin ears, *cuates* (*šaninkuáte*), are said to come because God wishes to send a little more. Sometimes large ears have four or five points; they are said to be the hand of the planter.

- [782] The family harvesting the first green corn in the town places two or three ears on the altar of San Francisco. Each family gives one or two *cargas* of maize on the cob to the priest.

- 789 If the rains do not come at the proper time near the end of May, the image of San Ramos [778] is taken to the peak of San Marcos. The image is placed on a white sheet, held by a man at each corner, and tossed in the sheet. If San Ramos can be made to cry, it begins to rain immediately. During the rite a *rezador* recites a rosary, copal is burned, and *cohetes* are fired.

- 241 Every year, beginning in January, the grass is burned, causing great damage to the forests and destroying the last remnants of pasture. The burning is said to prevent heavy frosts, while the smoke hastens the coming of the rains. Town officials and officers of the Forest [632] Service succeeded in extinguishing most of the fires in 1940.

It is said there are no beliefs regarding wheat. Nevertheless, wheat must be carried in a wooden bowl while sowing or it will be attacked by rust, "*tecolote*." Rust is a sign the planter used his hat, blanket, or some other improper article at planting. Girls plait elab-

939 Both men had arrived with the highway construction crews; neither was making what he regarded as a satisfactory living and both hoped to leave.

Tile and brick are made in an old chapel and surrounding grounds, formerly part of the *curato* or curacy. Ten percent of the finished [427] tile or brick is given to the *municipio* as rent [632] for the buildings and for the right to dig clay on public lands.

A grayish clay is brought to the factory in sacks by mules. It is mixed with water and manure in a board-lined pit in the patio, where it is turned with spades and hoes and trodden with bare feet. The mixed clay is pressed into a trapezoidal wooden form laid flat on a table (fig. 5). The top is smoothed carefully with the wet hand. The clay is then slipped off the table onto a wooden form resembling half of a truncated cone, but with a handle. After a few moments, the clay, now in the shape of a tile, is slipped off on the floor. When fairly well dried, the tile is moved outdoors for further drying.

Bricks are made in the same fashion but with a different wooden form. Both brick and tile are fired in a wood-fired kiln in the patio. The wood is cut and hauled by the brickmakers and tilemakers. The time required to make a thousand brick or tile is about 9 days, as follows:

	Days
Getting and mixing clay.....	2
Cutting and hauling wood.....	1
Shaping 1,000 brick or tile.....	5
Loading kiln.....	1
Total.....	9

TEXTILES

285 *Mats*.—Most sleeping mats used in Cherán are imported, but at least three women make them locally. The mats are made of tules imported on burros from Erongaricuaro on Lake Pátzcuaro. The mats are made in twilled technique, usually treating two tules as a single weaving element. The only tool observed was [412] a stone fist hatchet for severing tules.

294 *Hat making*.—About four men manufacture men's hats of palm straw braid, although production does not meet the local demand. The activity involves complex trading arrangements, for palms do not grow in Tarascan terri-
439

[p. 91a]

181 with the larger national economy. Some of the
 556 deficiencies of this report spring from the fact
 that study of these larger economic systems
 has not yet been made. It is apparent that the
 Cherán system functions in considerable part
 as a money economy and that in many respects
 it is essentially a European type economy.

Nevertheless, there are some differences of
 possible significance. Despite the fact the
 economy may be studied in monetary terms,
 wealth concepts do not revolve wholly about
 money and its values. Land itself has a sur-
 prisingly low money value, yet it is the major
 basis for evaluating individual wealth. Maize
 also occupies a higher position than its money
 value would indicate. Money is valued after
 maize, not before it, and the man who has
 money but no maize is apt to be regarded as

[text continues on top of p. 91b]

THE COMMUNITY

128 The community of Cherán may be viewed in
 several ways. There are, first of all, the phys-
 ical attributes of the town, its layout, subdivi-
 sions, and boundaries. There are the objective
 characteristics of the people who occupy the
 area, their numbers, demographic characteris-
 tics, and groupings. Yet other aspects of the
 community are the bonds which hold it together
 and the groupings within which the individual
 functions as a part of the larger entity—the
 family, the kinship group, the various institu-
 tions such as the *compadrazgo*. The organiza-
 tion of the community politically is also of great
 importance: the structure of government, its
 management, organization, functions, and
 obligations. Finally, there looms important
 in Cherán the ceremonial and religious organi-
 zation. Although logically forming a part of
 this section, discussion of the latter is deferred
 for a separate treatment.

THE MUNICIPIO

632 Cherán is, first of all, a *municipio*, an admin-
 634 istrative unit, smaller than the usual county in
 the United States but having somewhat similar
 characteristics. The ordinary *municipio* in
 Michoacán consists of a *cabecera* or head town,
 somewhat similar to our county seat in func-
 tions. In most Tarascan *municipios* about half

[text continues on middle of p. 91b]

[P.91b]

Sierra Tarascans

181 poor indeed if there should be a maize shortage.
 556 Even in normal times, the man who has to buy
 maize is pitied, even though he has plenty of
 money.

Although further analysis might be desirable, it also seems that the emphasis on non-productive expenditures is higher in Cherán than in our own culture. The outlay in cash and goods involved in religious festivals, weddings, and similar events, seems much higher proportionately. Men often forego material advantage also for the spiritual rewards of offices connected with the church, an aspect which has not yet been discussed but which will be described later in detail. It seems doubtful if the motivations in these cases correspond entirely to those of the "conspicuous expenditures" of our own society.

THE COMMUNITY

- 632 the population live in the *cabecera*. Subordi-
 634 nate to the *cabecera* ordinarily are a number of
tenencias, villages of several hundred to more
 than a thousand population, and *rancherías* or
 other small units. All these subordinate units
 are administered from the *cabecera* through
 local, appointed delegates, the *jefes de tenencia*.
 Theoretically the residents in the *tenencias* and
 other units play an equal part with the inhabi-
 tants of the *cabecera*; in practice, government
 is controlled from the *cabecera*.

Cherán differs from the usual pattern in that the *municipio* consists of the *cabecera* and one small *ranchería*. Cherán, the town, is thus about twice as large as most Tarascan *cabeceras*, although the *municipio* has about the same population as others. Formerly the situation was somewhat different, with the *tenencia* of Cheranástico forming part of the *municipio*. As the result of circumstances to be related later, the people of Cheranástico withdrew from the *municipio* of Cherán and now form part of the *municipio* of Paracho. Had the population of Cheranástico been sufficiently large, it might even have become a separate *municipio*. The withdrawal of Cheranástico emphasizes the fact that *cabeceras* and *tenencias* have their respective boundaries within the larger limits of the *municipio*.

632 The general situation of the *municipio* has
 634 already been discussed in the first section of
 this paper. That discussion and maps 1, 2, and
 3 indicate the main features, and no further
 amplification seems necessary.

423 The *municipio* has fairly well defined bound-
 632 aries, although there are usually disputes with
 neighboring communities. Thus Cherán cur-
 rently has disputes with Cheranástico and
 Arantepacua. The boundaries are marked in
 various ways. In the cultivated areas the
 boundaries are marked with stone walls.
 Where water courses form the boundaries, no
 markers are placed, but in the woods, a strip
 4 or 5 meters wide is cleared along the
 [476] boundary. This is done by communal labor,
 and when the line needs clearing again an
 assembly is called and a day fixed for the work.
 Every male is supposed to go. The Municipal
 Representative (described later) is supposed to
 lead the party.

THE TOWN AND ITS SUBDIVISIONS

633 Cherán is a compact and essentially urban
 [167] settlement with a population of about 5,000.
 Few North Americans, unfamiliar with the
 concentrated settlement forms of Mexican
 towns, would imagine it contained anything like
 this population. There are no suburbs and
 very little straggling out of houses from the
 main center. Around the outskirts the lots are
 a little bigger and the density of population is
 less but the transition from town to open fields
 is nevertheless abrupt.

361 The layout of the town is undistinguished.
 A central plaza with a fountain, *portales* or
 sidewalks covered with arches about it, the
 municipal building, school, priest's residence,
 and church may be duplicated in hundreds of
 Mexican towns. The plaza is not today the
 center of the settlement geographically. Un-
 doubtedly the town has grown since the time of
 its founding, and because of the deep *barranca*
 to the north, expansion has been in the other
 directions, leaving the plaza north of the pres-
 ent center of town by two or three blocks.

363 Radiating from the plaza is a network of
 streets laid out in a rectangular grid which
 makes only minimal concessions to the irregu-
 larities of the terrain. The enclosed blocks or
manzanas are utilized as administrative divi-

608 parents and *compadres* are taken seriously in Cherán, it is obvious from the description given above that the *compadrazgo* obligations are nearly as important as those of kinship, if not more so. Scarcely a person in Cherán does not have at least 10 or 15 *compadres*. Most people have 20 or 25 or more. Don Luís Velasquez, the oldest of the marriage arrangers, who also says prayers at funerals, stated that he had more than 100 *compadres* of baptism alone. When it is considered that usually one acquires most of his *compadres* through weddings, the total number possessed by Don Luís must be enormous. He declined even to make a guess at the number of *compadres* he had of all classes. The obligations of *compadres* of baptism are as great or greater than those of relatives, with the exception of the immediate family (parent-child and possibly sibling obligations), while those of other classes are at least equal to those of cousins.

Some use of the *compadrazgo* is made by the church on special occasions. When a new image is blessed in church, for example, people are invited to become godparents of the image. They kneel behind the image when the priest blesses it. For this they are expected to pay from 1 to 5 pesos. In such cases the participants do not call each other *compadres*, nor do they have any relationship with the owner of the image in case it is a household saint.

GOVERNMENT

632 The governmental system of Cherán on the surface and in its organization is not obviously different from that of any other Michoacán *municipio*. In its functioning, however, it possesses many unconventional features. Even elections, ostentatiously conducted according to legal forms, may actually be conducted very differently beneath the surface.

The major governmental agency is the *ayuntamiento* of five persons and five alternates or *suplentes*. These serve a term of 2 years and are alternated in office, two being elected one year and three the next. Elections are made by *barrio*. Formerly Cheranástico elected one of the five; since this *tenencia* has become associated with Paracho, I could not discover what device was used to elect the fifth member. Whether the situation is still not resolved or whether there was a purposeful vagueness about

632 procedures I could not discover. One of the members of the *ayuntamiento* automatically serves as mayor, the office rotating from one *barrio* to another each year.

In addition to the *ayuntamiento*, there are a secretary and a treasurer, both chosen by the *ayuntamiento*; a *sindico*, who is one of the members of the *ayuntamiento*; an elected judge and *suplente* and a secretary of the court.

[624] Certain other duties are performed by *comisionados*, that is, persons commissioned by the *ayuntamiento* or by the mayor. These include the 4 *barrio* chiefs and the 45 block chiefs. *Comisionados* may also be named for special duties in connection with fiestas or public works.

In addition to the above officials, there are other groups with special duties. The representative of the people, *representante del pueblo*, and two assistants are named by the town. The representative is confirmed in office by the Governor of the State and stays in office until deposed. His main duties are looking after the public lands. Finally, there is the *reserva*, headed by the *jefe de defensa*. The

[625] *reserva* is a group of armed men, 11 in number, authorized by the State military authorities, and, at the time of the study, headed by the real political boss of the town.

[662] The nature of these offices will now be described in more detail.

Ayuntamiento.—Five *propietarios* and five *suplentes* make up the group, serving 2 years. Those from odd-numbered *barrios* are elected one year, those from even-numbered *barrios* the next year. Cherañástico was classed as an odd-numbered *barrio*; what is done now is not clear. One of the members of the group serves as mayor, the other as *sindico*. The remaining members participate in policy decisions and in the naming of certain officials. Otherwise they have few duties. The *suplentes* apparently sometimes participate in discussion, but they have no real function except in case of the death or absence of their *propietario*. Members of the *ayuntamiento* receive no pay. Normally they meet once a week to discuss municipal affairs.

Mayor or Presidente Municipal.—In years the odd-numbered *barrios* elect, if the mayor is to come from *barrio* I, the *sindico* comes from

632 *barrio* III. Cherañástico, when classed as *barrio* V, apparently never filled either office. Similarly, if the even-numbered *barrios* elect, the mayor will be from *barrio* II, the *síndico* from *barrio* IV. The following 2-year period the situation will be reversed. Although the mayor is elected for 2 years to the *ayuntamiento*, he serves only 1 year as mayor. The second year he is merely an ordinary *municipe* or *regidor*, that is, an ordinary member of the *ayuntamiento*.

The mayor has the most important duties in the government, for upon his ability and initiative depends most of the success of an administration. It is he who initiates most activities, the *síndico* who carries them out. Not only does the mayor preside at town meetings or *juntas* and meetings of the *ayuntamiento*, but he settles minor disputes and levies fines of less than 1 peso, orders temporary imprisonment, supervises and orders most municipal expenditures, appoints most of the *comisionados*, and sees that public works are initiated. The mayor alone of all the officials must be present daily in the *municipio*. If not present, he must have his *suplente* present. (In 1940, the mayor rarely was in the *municipio*, leaving administration to the *suplente*. If anything of crucial importance arose, however, the mayor would be called in.)

632 As a minor judicial official, the mayor settles
693 many small cases involving thefts, drunkenness, minor assault, rape, debt, or fraud. In some cases, brief jail sentences are imposed; in others, fines are assessed, all fines below a peso going into the pocket of the mayor as his only salary. The mayor also gives orders about minor improvements, such as cleaning the plaza or painting the benches. In case expenditures are involved, he may advance money out of his pocket for supplies or labor, later getting a receipt which he presents to the treasurer for payment.

632 *Síndico*.—The *síndico* supervises most public works and may initiate minor work. He is in charge of streets and the repair or reconstruction of bridges, and sees that many undertakings ordered by the mayor are carried out. With the help of a *veedor*, he oversees community affairs, such as the adequacy of the water supply and clandestine illegal activities.

632 He is in charge of the slaughterhouse; the collection of proper taxes and prevention of "black market" slaughtering are his responsibility. He supervises all questions of inheritance and the properties connected therewith, seeing that the heirs receive their due share of property. In cases of quarrels over inheritance, wounds inflicted with knives or pistols, and murders, [693] the *sindico* makes the initial investigations and prepares the papers for submission of the cases to the judge. The *sindico* receives no pay.

632 Secretary.—The secretary is named by the mayor with the approval of the *ayuntamiento* 217 without a fixed term being set. His duties are to make all classes of documents and to maintain the municipal archives. These include the birth, death, and marriage records of the town. The secretary is paid \$1.50 a day. He may augment this sum by preparing private documents for a fee. The office is fairly new; in the childhood of fairly young men there was no secretary. The present incumbent is not a native of the town.

632 *Veedor*.—The *veedor* is named by the *sindico* with the approval of the mayor. He is supposed to see that the water supply is functioning properly and to report any illegal acts. Apparently he receives no pay.

632 *Treasurer*.—The treasurer receives all the 651 town funds from various sources, including fines above 1 peso, taxes, assessments, and funds from State and Federal sources. He is responsible for the collection of the small tax on vendors at the markets. He pays all bills of the *municipio* and must keep detailed accounts which are inspected by State officials. The office of treasurer is also new. His pay is 25 percent of the income. There is no term to his office.

693 *Judge*.—The judge and his *suplente* are 632 usually elected every 2 years but if the office is satisfactorily filled, the election may not be held for 3 or 4 years. The judge hears all cases certified to him by the *sindico*. He may order brief imprisonment or fines, which are paid to the treasurer, but all serious cases are referred to the district court at Uruapan after a preliminary hearing. This is particularly true of murder cases or serious crimes. The judge reviews all cases of inheritance in which quarrels arise, and all land sales must be authorized

632 before the judge. In such cases he may discover falsified documents, and will levy fines
693 against the guilty party. Disputes over land ownership may come before him also and usually will be settled without reference to higher authorities. An example of the latter type of case occurred where a person occupied lands belonging to Aurelio Ceja S., which the latter had registered for 20 years. The intruder was
[685] sentenced to return the land, pay the owner 10
[691] percent of the value, and all costs of the litigation.

The judge receives no pay, but he is assisted by a secretary who is paid \$1 a day by the *municipio*. The secretary may collect fees for preparing private documents. More detail on judicial cases will be given later.

625 *Police*.—Two (later three) men were employed as police in 1940-41. Their main duties
632 were not actually police functions, however, but rather the running of errands and carrying messages for the mayor, *sindico*, and judge. Most real police functions are carried out by the *sindico*, *veedor*, and the *ronda*. The police receive 75 centavos daily; all are persons incapacitated in some way for heavy work.

632 *Comisionados*.—There are many kinds and classes of *comisionados*. Perhaps most important are the four *barrio* chiefs, the *jefes de*
624 *cuartel*, appointed by the mayor each year. These men, together with the previous officials, are exempt from any other service during their year of office. The *barrio* chief commands the block chiefs and also the *ronda*. He transmits instructions of the *ayuntamiento* to the block chiefs when necessary.

The block chiefs are also appointed by the mayor for 1 year, and they have no other duties. On instructions from the *barrio* chief, the block chiefs notify the residents in their block if any communal labor is necessary, such as repairs to the water system, road or bridge work, clearing of town boundaries, or work in connection with a *fiesta* etc., and they see that each person does his duty. Special block chiefs may be named for unusual events such as the taking of the census. Such special block chiefs serve only for the time necessary to complete their special assignment.

632 The *ronda* is a "voluntary" night watch. The
625 town is patrolled every night by a group of 8 to

632 12 men under the orders of the *barrio* chief.
 625 The latter has the duty of notifying individuals when they are to serve. Each *barrio* provides the *ronda* for a week in turn, and each individual serves a week every time he is called. Theoretically, every adult male is expected to perform this service, but the men over 40 or 50 years and persons of some distinction are seldom if ever asked. One of the assistants in the project, member of the committee in charge of communal property and a school teacher, had not been asked to serve for several years. Neither do the storekeepers serve; instead, they give a package of cigarettes or some 10 centavos to those who do serve. There is no obligation, nor any regularity, about this gift. The average man who is asked to serve probably is called on four or five times a year.

[431] *Comisionados* may also be named if funds are to be raised for some special municipal purpose. The purpose may be to send a delegation to Morelia or Mexico City to look after the interests of the town in some affair, or to purchase material for some public work for which funds are not available in the treasury, such as the materials for the water tanks. This may happen twice in a year or may not occur at all. The *comisionados* are charged with collecting the money in their *barrio* or whatever area is designated.

796 There are many *comisionados* in connection
 632 with fiestas. For the fiesta of the patron saint in October, some 70 *comisionados* are named to raise funds for music, fireworks, and other expenses of the fiesta. A group is named by the mayor for each *barrio*, and it has the responsibility of raising money through taking up a collection (or members paying out of their own pockets), conducting negotiations with musicians or fireworks makers, and seeing that the work is completed. In addition, four men are commissioned each to provide a *moro* dancer. The *comisionado* has to seek out a dancer, pay for his food and costume, and take care of him during the fiesta. Finally, at least 40 young men (10 or more from each *barrio*) are commissioned to provide poles for building the bull ring. The total for this fiesta is not less than 114 *comisionados*.

[535] For the fiesta of Corpus, eight *comisionados* are named for each *barrio* for each occupation

632 represented in the fiesta. Each major tradi-
 796 tional occupation is required to hire a band, and
 the *comisionados* must raise the money by tak-
 ing up a collection or by paying out of their
 own pockets. A separate set of *comisionados*
 is named to take up another collection to hire
 music for the celebration of the Octava. Vol-
 untary service is also given by the bee hunters.
 The total *comisionados* for this fiesta probably
 reaches 250. *Comisionados* for a fiesta often
 put in many days of labor.

632 One final type of *comisionado* should be men-
 796 tioned, the men named to do communal labor.
 Probably every eligible man has to put in 2
 or 3 days a year on such work. This may
 be for work assigned to a *barrio*, or it may be
 some community-wide program such as cutting
 poles for the erection of an electric light system.

At a rough estimate, probably each man
 eligible for commissions gives about 14 days or
 nights of service a year to the community, if it
 be taken into account that about half the adult
 males are exempt for reason of age or service
 such as office holding, school teaching, store
 keeping, etc. However, the work is probably
 very unevenly distributed, for there is no sys-
 tematic method of assignment. A person who
 raises many objections or who is not in proper
 economic condition may evade many commis-
 sions. For example, no right-minded mayor
 would commission a poverty-stricken man to
 bring out a moro. Consequently, persons who
 are conscientious and do not complain are apt
 to receive many more commissions than others.

632 *Reserva.*—The *reserva* consists of 11 men
 625 armed by the Government (State or Federal?)
 with modern weapons and, in 1940, captained
 by the real political boss of the town, Moisés
 Valencia. Although all were agreed that the
 11 were chosen by the people, no one seemed
 to have any idea of the mechanism of choice.
 In all probability the group was chosen in the
 same way Valencia was chosen political boss,
 through aggressiveness in defense of town in-
 terests and personal popularity. Even a town
 the size of Cherán does not need formal elective
 machinery at times in order to express popular
 will, as will be seen in the discussion of elections.
 During the disturbed period in Michoacán dur-
 ing the installation of President Camacho, the
 reserve received instructions from the military

632 district commander to arrest all strangers and
625 send them to Uruapan. So far as I could learn,
nothing was done.

632 *Representative of the people.*—The represent-
ative of the people or *representante* is named by
the people at a town meeting along with two
other persons, forming an administrative com-
mittee. The representative is the *presidente* of
the committee, another is a secretary, and the
third is an ordinary member or *vocal*. The ap-
pointments are confirmed by the Governor and
last until the people elect new ones at another
junta or town meeting. None of the members
receives any pay but the work is not onerous.
Usually signing a few papers is the major duty.
The reward, according to one member of the
committee, is in being selected as one of the
best "elements" in the town.

632 The collection of funds for use of the forest
651 lands is done by the inevitable *comisionado*
system. With the approval and, if necessary,
the backing of the mayor and *ayuntamiento*, the
committee names the *comisionados* who collect
28 centavos from each householder every 2
months for the right to cut firewood on public
lands. This money is used to pay the Federal
taxes.

632 At present no one is supposed to cut wood
313 for lumber, charcoal, posts, etc., without secur-
[474] ing a permit from the forestry service. (As
indicated elsewhere, efforts were being made to
concentrate all activity in the hands of a
cooperative. The description here is of condi-
tions before organization of the cooperative.)
To prevent unauthorized exploitation of the
forests by Cherán residents, or poaching by
persons from other towns, a forester is em-
ployed to patrol the woods. The source of pay
of the forester is obscure, but he is entitled to
make use of a certain amount of fallen timber
on his own account and if he encounters
poachers from other towns (such as Zacapu,
Carapan, and Purépero), he may either con-
fiscate their products and sell them or charge
the poachers 20 or 25 centavos for each burro
load. The proceeds are kept by the forester.

632 The institution of the *representante* is rea-
sonably old; at least it has been in existence as
long as men now living. While the representa-
tive apparently has no official responsibility, if
things go wrong he is blamed. In 1939, a

632 forest fire damaged a considerable area and the forestry engineers called the representative down severely for not having been more efficient in fighting the fire. This attitude was hardly justified in view of the strong Tarascan tradition of burning the pastures in the winter. Illegal exploitation of the forests is also blamed on the representative. Two major cases occurred during the period field work was under way, one involving illegal cutting of railroad ties, the other, illegal sale of lumber. Responsibility for failure to prevent both infractions was laid to the laxness of the *representante*. In connection with one of these cases, a town *junta* was called to discuss what should be done, but no decision was reached and the matter was finally dropped.

632 It was evidently felt that the *representante*
578 would be involved in boundary disputes if they affected public lands. The two disputes existing in 1940, however, apparently affected only lands in private ownership. The dispute with Arantepacua was in process of settlement with a compromise being made between the two claims. As there was only a question of which town would get credit for the taxes paid, the dispute was not bitter. The quarrel with the former *tenencia* of Cheranástico, however, was much more prolonged and bitter. Apparently Cheranástico claimed some of the best agricultural lands of the lower plain as community property. It was, however, owned in individual holdings by owners who all had registered titles. Consequently, Cheranástico has accomplished nothing, but every time there was a new governor or other governmental change, the people of Cheranástico made another attempt.

BARRIO FUNCTIONS AND COMMUNAL IMPROVEMENTS

632 In addition to the function of the *barrio* or
621 *cuartel* as an administrative device as described above, certain public improvements are made through the *barrio* mechanism. In this the *barrios* do not act independently but merely as instrumentalities of the *municipio*. No informant had ever heard of a *barrio* doing anything on its own initiative.

632 The major duty performed by the *barrio* is
621 the maintenance of the water system. Each
312 *barrio* has a section of the aqueduct within the

632 town (not the pipe line to the edge of town but
 621 the system of hollowed logs which conducts
 312 water to the center of town) for which
 it is responsible. Upon notification that re-
 pairs are needed or that logs must be
 replaced, the *barrio* chief notifies men in his
barrio of the work needed and the time.
 This notification may come from the *sindico*
 (or his *veedor*), or any person noticing some-
 thing wrong may report it to the *municipio*.
 The *barrio* not only provides labor but must
 raise funds if equipment or materials are
 needed. *Barrio* I is responsible for the section
 from the cement water tanks to the street called
 Arista. *Barrio* II is responsible for the section
 from Arista to Pensador, *barrio* III for the
 section from Pensador to Olvide, and *barrio* IV
 for the section from Olvide to the pipe line.

The work is done under the direction of the
sindico. Usually 24 *comisionados* are named
 for each log trough needed. Eight men are
 responsible for cutting the log and hollowing it
 out; 8 more bring the log down from the moun-
 tains, and 8 others put it in place.

632 In addition, each *barrio* has responsibility for
 621 certain other public works. For example,
 [491] *barrio* III is responsible for maintaining two
 bridges on the road to Zacapu.

[767] Still another *barrio* duty is cleaning the
 graveyard of weeds and brush in preparation
 for the Day of the Dead. The cemetery is
 divided into four squares corresponding to the
 four *barrios*, and the young men from each
barrio are assigned to a section. In 1940, in
barrio III, having the most numerous popula-
 tion, each youth had a strip 4 paces wide by 65
 paces long to clear, while youths of other
barrios had strips from 6 to 8 paces wide.
Barrio IV, although having a population as
 large as *barrio* II and larger than *barrio* I, took
 a half day longer to do its part and the young
 men were teased about it.

632 The maintenance of the pipe line is a sore
 621 point, evidently. The original pipe line was
 312 installed by the State or Federal Government.
 653 Some maintenance is done by the *municipio*,
 but the line was in bad condition in 1940 and
 needed replacing. Even more interest, how-
 ever, was shown in replacing the present wooden
 aqueduct with a pipe line and perhaps extend-
 ing it to some other parts of town. It was

[p. 109a]

Sierra Tarascans

632 estimated that the project of merely replacing
 621 the wooden-aqueduct would cost between \$2,500
 312 and \$3,000, and efforts were being made to get
 the Federal Government to provide the money.
 653. Actually the job could have been done by an
 assessment little larger than that called for by
 the two main fiestas of the town, but such an
 idea had not occurred to anyone. This feeling
 that major improvements should be made by
 outside agencies is a common one in Mexico.

377 This attitude was somewhat reinforced by
 632 the action of the Federal Government in ex-
 653 tending a power line to the town and supplying
 621 it with street lighting. In this case, it is true,
 the town was required to provide the posts for
 the power system. *Comisionados* were named
 who cut the posts and charred the ends under
 the direction of the *síndico*. However, this
 involved expenditure of labor rather than of
 money.

491 A number of road repair jobs are undertaken
 632 from time to time. In 1940, in preparation for
 621 the harvest, the community repaired part of the
 road toward Nahuatzen. A new entry into
 town was made which avoided the necessity of
 crossing a bridge over the southern *barranca*.
 The existing bridge was in bad repair, and
 replacement was thus postponed.

ELECTIONS

632 Elections in Cherán ostensibly follow regular
 666 legal forms. Extensive and nearly complete
 662 lists of voters are prepared by the municipal
 officials. Some 2 or 3 weeks before the election
 the mayor calls a town meeting to nominate
 candidates. The mayor asserted that everyone
 was invited in 1940 but that very few attended.
 Most of those, he insisted, had been rounded
 up by the police. Others felt that only the most
 influential people in town were invited. In
 either case, apparently only about 50 persons
 attended. As at the 1940 election *barrios* II
 and IV were to elect members of the *ayunta-*
miento, two tickets were nominated. These
 tickets were forwarded to the State offices of
 the PRM (*Partido Revolucionario Mexicano*)
 in Morelia, and the second of the two tickets
 was approved as the official PRM ticket. This
 must have been an act of prestidigitation on the
 part of the State officials, for there was nothing
 to choose between the two tickets and the State

- 632 officials could have had no basis for selection. Actually, the *suplente* in *barrio* II was one of the reactionary members of the community, leader of the *añes*. He was chosen solely to stop his constant criticism of the administration.

666
662 The election was held on December 1, 1940. In theory, the first Sunday of December is the usual day. A commission, named by the mayor 15 days before, conducted the elections. Two ballot boxes were placed at opposite ends of the *corredor* in front of the *municipio*, one for each *barrio*. Only 45 votes were cast in *barrio* II and only 25 in *barrio* IV. The result of the election was to select the official PRM ticket in *barrio* II and the "opposition" ticket in *barrio* IV.

The procedure resulted in the mayor for the succeeding year, the successful candidate for *barrio* II, being elected by the majority of the 45 votes cast in that *barrio*. The mayor-elect promptly got very drunk and paraded from saloon to saloon for 2 or 3 days, shouting, "*Yo y Avila Camacho—I and Avila Camacho.*" (Camacho was about to be installed as President of the Republic.) Murmurs of protest about the new mayor began to be heard on every side, becoming louder and louder. By the end of the month rumors of violence at the installation of the new *ayuntamiento* on January 1 were heard on every side. Loudest to complain were those who had attended neither the nominating *junta* nor the elections.

On January 1 very few people attended the installation of the new officers. The new officials went at the head, the new mayor in the middle, on his right the new *síndico*, and on his left the judge. The mayor carried a *bandera*, a round disk with the national colors in three vertical stripes, while his two companions carried ribbons hanging down from the *bandera*. Behind the new officials came the *reserva*, then a relatively small group of males. At the rear came the band. The procession made a circuit about the plaza and streets of the central part of town. *Cohetes* were fired off as the procession started and at each corner where it changed direction.

On the return to the *municipio*, the new mayor made a speech, received with a scattering of handclaps. The *jefe político*, Moisés Valencia, made another speech, urging cooperation

632 with the new officials and the betterment of the
666 town. He stressed especially fixing up the
662 plaza and planting trees. His remarks drew
more handclaps than did those of the mayor.
This concluded a remarkably tame and peaceful affair.

On the surface, all the rumors had come to nothing and an uninformed visitor might have thought the talk had been nothing else. But the mayor who was inducted at this ceremony was not the elected mayor. In fact, he had not even been a candidate. The same was true of the *suplente* for the *sindico*. Obviously, explanation is called for.

Actually, the matter was simple. The talk and complaints had resulted in action. Apparently no one, on sober thought, wanted the elected mayor. So the *ayuntamiento* picked out someone they thought would be satisfactory and installed him as mayor. The choice seemed actually an excellent one. The new mayor was one of the best-educated men in town, a sober, honest, and conscientious man, fairly prosperous but not rich. None of the investigators found any objection or any tendency to question the action. According to the retiring mayor, one man, an *Almazanista* (that is, a follower of Almazán, the defeated presidential candidate) with little following had raised some objections. But the retiring mayor pointed out that the objector had never bothered to come to the nominating *junta* or to vote, although the mayor had personally invited him to do so and had asked him to make a house-to-house visit to all his followers, urging their attendance. Legality was to be maintained, however, and the State authorities received proper election returns certifying the election of the men installed.

Did this represent corruption and the breakdown of democratic methods as would be the interpretation of legalistic minds deeply steeped in the proprieties of parliamentary procedure? None of the staff of the investigation in Cherán felt it was. The persons finally inducted into office were capable men. They seemed highly acceptable to the bulk of the population, whereas the duly elected candidates were not. Rather, it seems that a truly democratic result had been obtained for a people who are unfamiliar with and distrustful of parliamentary procedures.

632 Persons who are shocked at the procedures
 662 at Cherán should seriously contemplate the
 666 difficulties in carrying out a formal election
 212 with written ballots with a population which
 is very largely illiterate. In this case economic
 limitations and lack of imagination prevented
 carrying out the system used in national elec-
 tions where the candidates each select a color
 and separate ballots are printed in the different
 colors. The voter then asks for his ballot by
 color and drops it into the ballot box. Not
 secret, and lending itself to ballot box stuffing,
 the method is at least an attempt to deal with
 the problem of an illiterate electorate. In a
 town such as Cherán the method followed in the
 election described seems equally efficacious—as
 long as the officials are responsive to public
 opinion.

632 That unconventionalities are frequent in elec-
 665 tions is further illustrated by the presidential
 666 elections earlier in the same year. Many
 months before the election a group of Almazán
 followers organized and began an active cam-
 paign in the town. The followers of Camacho
 (the PRM group) remained inactive. At the
 end of 2 or 3 months a PRM delegation waited
 on the Almazán followers and pointed out that
 there had been no interference with their cam-
 paign but that nevertheless the bulk of the town
 favored Camacho. The facts were apparently
 indisputable, and when the PRM group stressed
 the fact that further campaigning could only
 result in creating divisions and dissensions in
 the town, the Almazán group ceased its cam-
 paign. At the election, Cherán cast a unani-
 mous ballot for Camacho.

185 Two things of interest emerge from this
 666 account. The first is the power of the argu-
 ment against disunity in the community.
 Particularly in the Indian community, unity is
 prized almost above all else. Sophisticated in
 some ways as Cherán is, this argument is still
 one of the most potent that can be made. The
 second point of interest is the bearing this
 sequence of events has on interpretation of the
 national election returns in Mexico. What
 happened in Cherán probably happened in
 hundreds of other towns in Mexico and helps
 partly to explain the one-sided results usually
 reported in Mexican elections.

665 In relation to external politics, most Cherán
 666 inhabitants have little interest. There are many
 people who are willing to take a free ride to
 some big rally for one or another presidential
 candidate, eat heartily of the free meal, and
 cheer the candidate's speech enthusiastically.
 The following week they are quite as ready to
 accept the hospitality of the opposing candidate,
 and at election time be too disinterested to vote.
 Not only is interest lacking, but there is con-
 siderable cynicism about the external Govern-
 ment agencies. As one humble farmer re-
 marked, "*Almazán o Camacho, ¿que nos im-
 porta? Aquí siempre estamos en la riata—*
Almazán or Camacho, what does it matter to
us? Here we are always in the noose."

484 Some interest is also awakened by the dis-
 666 covery of the Indians as a colorful adjunct to
 ceremonials. At the inauguration of Camacho
 as president, some Federal agency (probably
 the *Departamento Autónomo de Asuntos*
Indígenas) took the town officials, the band, and
 a group of moro dancers to Mexico City. The
 Cherán citizens lucky enough to get such a trip
 are always pleased, but it is doubtful whether
 they are much interested in the reasons.

FISCAL SYSTEM

632 Just as the economy of Cherán in general is
 651 partly a money economy, the governmental
 system is also based partly on money. The
 presence of hired officials immediately requires
 some form of cash income for the town. This
 income is derived from the following sources:

1. Taxes on each beef slaughtered.
2. Taxes of \$1.15 on each bill of sale for an
 animal.

3. Fines.

4. Business licenses. These are collected
 by the State tax collector, who remits 40 percent
 of collections to the municipal treasury.

[422] 5. Registration of brands. Every cattle
 brand must be registered and the registry re-
 newed in the first 3 months of each year. This
 is the biggest source of income for the *muni-
 cipio*. Three pesos are collected by the *muni-
 cipio*, which also collects and remits 30 centavos
 to the State government and 15 centavos to the
 Federal Government for each brand.

6. Market tax (*piso de plaza*). Every
 vender in the plaza on Saturdays and at the

- 632 fiestas (except Corpus) must pay a small tax
651 based on the amount of space occupied. Income from this source averages \$5 or \$6 weekly.

7. Certification of documents. This is rather rare, consisting of charges for copies of documents, marriage or birth records, etc.

8. Taxes on forest products. All forest products sold outside the community are taxed by the Federal Government and must be accompanied by a certificate of origin. Dealers in the large centers pay the tax, surrendering the certificate of origin. The Federal Government then remits 30 percent of the tax to the State government and 20 percent to the municipal government.

[642] It should be noted that real estate taxes in Mexico are a monopoly of the Federal Government and there are no local taxes. Ten percent of all local collections other than the registry of brands is paid to the State government and 5 percent to the Federal Government.

The income from all these sources varies. In the first 3 months of the year it may exceed \$300 a month. At other times it may be as low as \$125 a month. In the year Pedro Chávez was treasurer it totaled about \$1,800. In 1940 it must have been considerably higher, [123] but the investigators were already sufficiently on sufferance to be unable to demand access to the current town records.

632 Expenditures against income are as follows:

	Per month
Two policemen at \$0.75 (a third policeman was added in 1941) ..	\$45.50
Municipal secretary	45.00
Court secretary	30.00
Treasurer (25 percent of income at an estimated \$150 monthly average)	37.50
Monthly average	\$158.00

In addition, there are some occasional small irregular expenditures, for instance, painting the plaza benches for a fiesta etc. These are small, for the regular expenses pretty well use up the regular income. The treasury usually has only 2 or 3 pesos in it at the end of the year and often shows a small deficit of 10 or even 20 pesos. For this reason, unusual expenditures [651] are financed by a collection.

The treasurer is required to make three types of reports, one to the Federal Treasury Depart-

632 ment, one to the State treasurer, and one to the
652 general accounting office of the State. The
first two deal with income payable to Federal
or State government, while the third deals
with all the municipal accounts.

UNOFFICIAL ORGANIZATIONS

467 The functioning of government in Cherán is
665 often affected by unofficial organizations and
informal groups. At the time of the study,
the most influential of such groups was one
affiliated with the CTM (*Confederación de
Trabajadores Mexicanas*). Probably this same
group also functioned as a local branch of the
official government party, the PRM (*Partido
Revolucionario Mexicano*).

The actual functioning and organization of
these groups was quite informal. Consider-
able difference of opinion existed in the town
as to the desirability of such organizations,
many holding that they are disruptive in
character. Others, the so-called progressives,
felt that such organization is necessary if the
town is to receive its fair share of Government
aid. Between these conflicting viewpoints
could arise violent disagreement. With great
reasonableness, however, the "progressives"
organized only informally. Those who felt the
town should be organized in the fashion men-
tioned, named officers and got themselves recog-
nized by the State branch of the CTM. When
documents arrive which need action or signa-
ture, the members of the group talk them over
informally in house-to-house visits and send
the necessary replies. There are no meetings
or overt evidence of the organization. From
the standpoint of union and party officials in
the State capital, the town is organized; from
the standpoint of the majority of the inhabi-
tants of Cherán, it is not.

661 The development of this informal organiza-
579 tion grew out of another and earlier organiza-
tion that had gotten the town a bad name.
In 1940-41, within a short time any investigator
soon heard of the *zafarrancho*, the disorder or
riot. Evidently a landmark, many events were
dated by reference to this affair. To learn
about it, however, was not easy. Many people
refused to talk about it at all; others suggested
that it was unwise to talk about it. Only after
many months was the story finally secured in

571 largely in terms of the normal and special political functions of kinship, ceremonial kinship, and friendship. But the cacical association is more than the concatenation of these social structures; it is a distinct political entity with its own patterns of action and its unique goal of power over the community.

66
667 Let us now turn to these distinctive workings of the cacicazgo. Political sovereignty is exercised primarily by the cacique and his inner core of relatives and friends--eight men in all. They are more or less supported by some twenty lesser leaders. Political matters are informally discussed at length by the leaders and some of the citizens at large. Important policy decisions are made at special meetings, sometimes secretly convened, after a partial decision has been previously reached. Important legal cases are likewise resolved before the court opens by the inner core leaders, especially by the oldest nephew of the cacique. Political decisions at the special meetings are generally by majority vote, but often a majority of the inner eight is enough, and in extreme cases the cacique imposes his will alone. The matters dealt with in special meetings and conversations between the inner leaders are primarily the following: all land distribution questions, public works (especially irrigation problems), the making up of the ballots for formal office, and reprisals against enemies and the quashing of nascent interest groups. Effective government is informal, and a description solely in terms of formal political institutions would miss the main point of Durazno politics.

[62] The informal structure of one cacical group in Durazno has always been paralleled by that of a contending or fallen party with its would-be cacique, secret meetings, and the same patterns of organization. At some times, as during 1927, the two parties have been equal in strength. At other times, as in 1956, the fallen party has contained only an aging leader with a pathetic kinship nucleus and some twenty followers. Durazno, like villages all over Michoacan, has a normal pattern of two or more contending factions, each related independently and informally to other villages and higher structures.

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578
563 The ethnic factor is often important here. During the agrarian period (1921-26), Durazno and the two other agrarian Indian villages of the valley fought together against the mestizo hirelings and Spanish landlords. A major turning point in Durazno political and cultural history came when opposing Indian factions within the village began using mestizo neighbors against their own "blood." The village agrarian caciques have themselves always been culturally marginal, participants in both Tarascan and mestizo culture. They feel a high ambivalence in both directions: partial rejection of their Indian followers, resentment toward mestizos, and different kinds of identification with both groups.

The village leaders, as political "middlemen" (Wolf, 1956), relate the political demands and supplies of their constituents to the partially complementary demands and supplies of the higher echelons, of the Cardenas machine in the case of Michoacan. In the case of two strong contending factions, both are separately related to two contesting state-wide structures, as during the "serrataista" period from 1932 to 1934. The indigenous, factional structure of the village, with its qualities of an ongoing clan viedetta, is sensitively and immediately connected to national "theoretical" questions such as the "decollectivization of the ejidal patrimony" (1925). The national problems translate downward into specific blood-and-soil-issues. The political relation between national structures and nerve-center villages like Durazno is constant and often direct; the Indian cacique goes straight to Mexico City to confer with the national party chairman.

632
661 The formal government in Durazno is divided between the civil and ejidal arms. The three civil officers enjoy slightly more prestige and pervasive power in the community organization and the arbitration of legal cases, while the four ejidal posts are the more

coveted because of the higher financial rewards. The nominal pay in both cases is supplemented by bribes and "cuts" from taxes, and by the ego satisfactions of exercising power. Elections take place by public vote every one and three years, respectively, following the informal composition of ballots and considerable discussion at open meetings. High public attendance at these meetings is due both to genuine interest and to fear of persecution if the cacical group should suspect boycotting. Although the duties are formally allotted to specific officers, such as a judge, the officers of both governmental arms actually operate as a group, rather flexibly playing the several roles. In 1956, for example, the civil secretary also functioned at times as judge and mayor.

Both the formal arms of government are controlled by the informal cacicago. Today, the preplanned ballot is always finally accepted at the public meetings. Under conditions of centralized autocracy, at least one officer in both the civil and ejidal arms is an inner core leader, and when political troubles are anticipated two offices in each branch may be filled by such nuclear individuals. In the heated election year of 1956, for example, the civil secretary, the ejidal president, and the president of the ejidal watch were nephews of the cacique; the cacique himself was ejidal treasurer, and an old "fighter" and friend of the cacique was judge.

Cacical systems, however, swing between the two extremes of autocratic centralization and contentious fission. When the historical process of contentious fission between the energetic "ex-have-nots" of agrarian politics reaches its extreme, both factions may offer ballots for both branches of government. They will be hotly contended in a variety of ways. The result may be that both factions are represented, as in 1927, or that one faction controls the ejido and another the civil government, as in 1945. Such formal reflexes of a breakdown of informal hegemony are invariably accompanied by a so-called "bad time," with attempts on the lives of the caciques of both factions. Cacical patterns thus rend communities and at other times provide a highly political integration, both in the name of a social and material progress that may actually take shape in the form of schools and public works. The extremes of contentious fission and autocratic centralization do not seem to be correlated with the degree of formal collectivization of the ejido, although such institutional collectivization does make it easier to exercise dictatorial powers and to extract larger financial cuts. On the other hand, the importance of centralized control for continued drainage of the ejido legitimizes the term "hydraulic caciques" (Wittfogel, 1957).

Both formal governments of Durazno are independently related upward to higher, formal structures. Durazno leaders have occupied numerous formal positions at higher levels owing to the salient informal role of the tiny pueblo in the intrigue, violence, and heartfelt radicalism of Michoacan politics. Politics and the cultivation of political leaders have in fact become a sort of communal specialty in Durazno. Durazno caciques founded and held numerous offices in the state-wide peasant League of Agrarian Communities; they have been municipal presidents three times, state congressmen three times, and, once, substitute to a national congressman. They have always formally controlled the important "Regional Committee," the regional organ of the National Peasant Confederation. While highly atypical with respect to this prominence, Durazno does exemplify the role that tough, sophisticated, and land-controlling Indian caciques can play in regional and state politics. As the people say, "Some towns specialize in hat-making, others in pottery. Durazno specializes in politics."

Primarily four political methods have been used by the caciques and their followers for the past forty years. The first, verbal persuasion, takes place in small informal groups and at the frequent political meetings; by comparison with other villages Durazno is a beehive of political discussions. Verbal persuasion figured especially during the